

REFERENCES ON ORAL HISTORY

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Oral history is one of the tools available to help supplement the archaeological record. It adds to evidence available from the documentary and ethnographic record, and contributes a personal, although sometimes idiosyncratic, facet to our understanding of past events. Oral history has obvious applications to the study of historic and ethnographic sites, but can also have potential in the study of prehistoric sites. As archaeologists make use of this important tool, three points become apparent:

(1) Archaeologists often are not trained in oral history. We have a lot to learn from ethnographers and historians.

(2) Often what is not said during oral history interviews is as important as what is said.

(3) When investigating the archaeological record of rural areas, where archival information is sporadic at best, utilization of oral historical traditions can be critical to fully understand and interpret sites. This is especially true with Native American sites.

With this in mind, the following references are offered as a guide to how to conduct effective oral interviews. Not all references are equally useful, but are included as some are more widely available than others. All are listed in the University of California *MelvyI* library computer system. In general, publications by the American Association of State and Local History are of high quality.

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